



Cemetery Commission Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: Thursday, September 19, 2019, 4:30 pm

Commissioners Present: Rita Church, Jennifer Diaz, Nancy Kirby, Alexandra Millar, Lainey Rappaport

Staff Present: Cindi Wight – BPRW Director, Kirsten Merriman-Shapiro (via phone) – CEDO
Holli Bushnell - Office Assistant

I. Approval of Agenda

Robert's Rules of Order was removed as a commissioner item. Nancy Kirby requested that Greenmount be added as an item to Old Business. With those changes Jennifer Diaz moved to approve the agenda, Kirby seconded. All were in favor.

II. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Alexandra Millar nominated Jennifer Diaz for the position of Chair. Rita Church nominated Lainey Rappaport for the position of Chair.

Millar asked both candidates to share the goals they hope to accomplish as chair and why they feel they would be the best person for the position.

Rappaport responded that her goals are to insure the city cemeteries are maintained to the best of her ability and to make sure that things that haven't been taken care of are. She has visited surrounding communities to talk about ongoing issues such as the fence, funding, and financing as well as their cemetery rules. She intends to fix things that are wrong, provide the historic cemetery with a strong fence, fix stones, and bring in volunteers. Rappaport believes her 42 years of leadership experience in the community (7 of those years spent on the cemetery commission) has provided her with the knowledge needed to be chair.

Diaz's goals also include cemetery beautification and maintenance with a specific focus on infrastructure repairs, but she also looks towards the future and hopes to move the cemeteries into the 21st century. She intends to take advancing burial and funereal trends, the growing desire for alternative burials, and spatial limitations into account as she and the commission plan for the future of Lakeview (developments in sections 8 and 6, the possible purchase of a new columbarium, etc...). In light of these goals, she feels fundraising will be a critical piece of the work the commission will need to do in the next year (and fundraising is something with which she has tremendous experience). Diaz also hopes to expand community outreach and bring more people (locals and visitors) into the cemetery. Maintaining and building relationships is what she does for a living and will be the backbone of her potential work as chair.

The vote was 3 to 2 in favor of Rappaport as chair. Diaz and Millar voted for Diaz, Rappaport, Church, and Kirby voted for Rappaport.

Following Rappaport's election as chair, Kirby nominated Diaz as Vice Chair. All were in favor.



Before moving on, Wight reiterated that Chair and Vice Chair are not co-heads of the commission, but will work together to develop an agenda and goals for the next year. Vice Chair will act in the Chair's stead should she be unable to attend a meeting. Finally, Church thanked Millar for her questions and Wight for her clarification of the positions.

III. Approval of Minutes from 6/27 and 7/10 meetings

Millar moved to accept the minutes, Diaz seconded, all were in favor.

IV. Old Business

A. Lakeview Fence Update

The low bidder on the RFP was Middlebury Fence with a bid for an all-aluminum replacement fence. The city is now under contract with them and they will begin work starting 10/10. Cedar trees that were in the planned path of the fence were removed on 9/13. The trees that remain (primarily lilacs) will not be removed. Wight was unsure of exact footage of the project at this time. Capital funds, not grant money, are allocated for payment.

Kirby asked if the whole fence is being replaced. Wight confirmed that it will be, however Preservation Trust will identify the best original sections of the fence to preserve for a display (either at Lakeview or at another, yet to be determined, location). Kirby suggested that sections of the fence in good condition be saved to replace or repair damaged sections up at Greenmount. Wight confirmed that this was a possibility, and, at the very least, the steel will be recycled.

B. One Way/Traffic Signs

Millar reports that during months of passive observation she has seen multiple visitors to Lakeview travel the wrong way through our one-way roads. She requests that the sign in the foliage at the entrance to the cemetery be moved to a more visible location. Wight will check with the facilities team to see what can be done. More signage may be added in the future.

C. Section 8 RFP

Wight reported that a new comprehensive planner will be starting with BPRW on 10/7. She has a background in landscape architecture, and Section 8 is on her list of projects. Rappaport asked if soil testing would be completed before the new planner starts on the project. Wight has full confidence that the new planner will do everything necessary to insure the project is successful.

D. Perpetual Care Fund Update

Wight reports that, as expected, there was a surplus of interest funds, roughly \$20,000, of Perpetual Care Fund interest that was not accounted for in the proposed cemetery budget. She requested those funds be set aside separately to be used for cemetery specific projects. Church suggested that the funds could be used to right and repair damaged stones. Wight confirmed that that is a possibility, however volunteers might also be useful for this purpose. Wight also suggested that the commission make a list of projects that specifically focus on perpetual care.

In terms of the bond to deed percentage of funds (95% deed, 5% bond) that has been in pilot for the last 3 years, Wight points out that any change in percentages would need to be worked out with the lawyers and would affect the operating budget of the cemetery. All commissioners



were in favor of continuing the current percentage allocation while the commission assesses the pilot and makes their decision as to whether or not to continue.

It was suggested that the commission reach out to other cemeteries to see how they handle their perpetual care funds. Also, a request was made to get Jeff Shedd's perspective concerning time spent on Greenmount and Elmwood (closed cemeteries) maintenance in comparison to Lakeview.

E. Greenmount

Kirby shared that her main goal in becoming a commissioner was rooted in her desire to care for and improve Greenmount. In her years as a direct neighbor, she would call in to the office with concerns and repair needs, but frequently felt her concerns were ignored. She sees multiple issues on a daily basis and does not know whom to contact concerning maintenance and upkeep needs.

For issues such as garbage and damaged infrastructure, Wight suggest Kirby make use of the See/Click/Fix app. It is the most direct way to communicate with DPW and other city departments concerning damaged or in need of repair city properties.

Kirby, dismayed at the general appearance of Greenmount, asked if it would be OK for her to take on a volunteer program for that cemetery. Wight confirmed that she could, and requested that Kirby inform BPRW so that supplies can be provided and a pick-up for trash/garbage can be scheduled.

V. New Business

A. Interment of War of 1812 Veterans

Since the last commission meeting Holli Bushnell was contacted by Kirsten Merriman-Shapiro (formerly and temporarily of CEDO) in regards to 14 Soldiers from the War of 1812 that were discovered between 2002 and 2006 during a streets upgrade. These burials were excavated and removed with the help of the UVM Consulting Archaeology Department, and have been stored at UVM ever since. Merriman-Shapiro asked whether burial at Lakeview would be possible, and Bushnell agreed to look into the available options.

After meeting with Merriman-Shapiro and the Consulting Archaeology team, Bushnell proposed a location in the "Summit" section of Lakeview as well as the use of a crypt to ensure continued access to the remains (for examination, DNA testing or possible removal and reburial elsewhere if requested by descendants). Jeff Shedd and Wight both approved of the project, proposed location, and crypt option (as opposed to in-ground burial or a full mausoleum), and tasked Bushnell with acquiring quotes for the crypt.

The commission was overwhelmingly in favor of this project and the interment of these veterans at Lakeview. At this time, Diaz moved that any city fees associated with the burial (interment, foundation) be waived. Kirby seconded and all were in favor.

Diaz asked Merriman-Shapiro (who participated in the meeting via phone) what the timeline on the project is. Merriman-Shapiro reports that the crypt is currently out for bid to multiple local monument dealers, and until a selection has been made, the timeline is unknown. She and



Bushnell both hope to have the crypt purchased and installed before the winter with veterans day as the ideal date for interment.

VI. Superintendent and Office Assistant Report

Bushnell reports that multiple tours will be happening over the course of the autumn and both Lakeview and Elmwood. Thea Lewis of Queen City Ghostwalk will be hosting one tour at Elmwood on 9/29 and two tours at Lakeview, one on 10/6 and the other on 10/20. Preservation Burlington will also be hosting an Elmwood tour on 10/13. Additionally, Bushnell, along with Recreation Specialist Nick Marinelli, will be holding 2 tours on 10/19. They will be collaborating with Citizen Cider to provide a cider tasting after the tours. One tour will be about smuggling and prohibition, the other will be about immigration and how other cultures treat death.

The commission reminded Bushnell that Lewis is supposed to provide the cemetery with a percentage of her profits (\$5 per ticket sold). Should Preservation Burlington sell tickets, they also will be required to provide a percentage of their sales. There was some discussion over whether a non-profit entity should pay less to hold a tour at a city cemetery. The commission may take this issue up in the future.

VII. Parks Director Items

Wight did not have additional items to discuss.

VIII. Commissioner Items

A. UVM Natural Resource Inventory Project

As Millar had to leave the meeting early, Bushnell provided an update at this time on the UVM Natural Resource Inventory Project. Four UVM students will be visiting the cemetery over the semester to do a natural resources inventory (surveying, cataloging trees, plants, animals, etc...). The commission requested that Bushnell reach out to the students and ask them to come to the next commission meeting.

B. Friends of Lakeview

Church took this opportunity to thank Bushnell for holding the volunteer picnic back in August. She also thanked the newly elected officers for accepting their positions and Wight for attending and guiding the meeting.

IX. Public Comments

No public comments were made at this time.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 6:36pm. The next meeting will be held on October 24 at 4:30pm at the Lakeview office.